
SUMMARY REPORT

ALTERATIONS TO GRASS STREET PLAY AREA, DARLINGTON

Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Stephen Harker, Resources Portfolio

Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of Children’s Services

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Members’ approval to make alterations to Grass Street Play Area, adjacent to Grass Street in the North Road area of Darlington

Summary

2. Following a successful capital bid, the re-building of North Road Primary School means that much of the current Grass Street play area will fall within the boundary of the new school building. With investment in new equipment and some re-modelling it will be possible to retain a play facility in the area, consistent with residents’ views.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) Members approve the transfer of the small parcel of land outlined in this report from general Council owned land to School Playing field; and
 - (b) Authorise the Borough Solicitor to complete the exchange accordingly.

Reasons

4. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons :-
 - (a) To reduce the Council’s responsibility for managing the subject land; and
 - (b) To provide suitable playing field area for the school whilst at the same time re-provide new facilities for the Grass Street Play Park.

Murray Rose,
Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

No Background papers were used in the preparation of this report.
Julia McCabe : Extension 2991

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| S17 Crime and Disorder | The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is considered that the contents of this report will have such an effect. |
| Health and Well Being | Providing safe play facilities assists parents to help their children enjoy the environment, exercise and play. |
| Sustainability | New play equipment provided will be of low environmental impact. The redistribution of land will make the park easier to manage. |
| Diversity | The refurbished park will maintain a community facility which can be enjoyed by all groups in the community. The play park will complement other leisure facilities maintained by the Council. |
| Wards Affected | North Road |
| Groups Affected | Children and Young People, parents, grandparents and carers. |
| Budget and Policy Framework | <p><u>Policy Framework:</u></p> <p>The issues contained within this report represent changes to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.</p> <p><u>Asset Management:</u></p> <p>a) There is no strategic reason for the Council's freehold interest in this particular site to be retained.</p> <p>b) If approval is granted to make alterations to the size of the play area, the land that is incorporated into school playing field will become the responsibility of North Road Primary school to maintain and manage.</p> |
| Key Decision | No |
| Urgent Decision | Yes: planning permission for the new school to be considered on 4 June 2008 |
| One Darlington: Perfectly Placed | Healthy Darlington: providing attractive, accessible and safe environments in all neighbourhoods that support relaxation and physical activities |

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. North Road Primary School has been allocated £6.5m as a pathfinder project under the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Primary Capital Programme initiative. The funding is being used to rebuild the 420 place primary school in brand new state of the art accommodation.
6. Phase 1 of the project will see the new school built on the site of the current school playing fields. Once the school is open in September 2009, work will then commence on Phase 2, which is the demolition of the existing school and re-provision of the playing fields.
7. Grass Street Play area lies adjacent to the current school playing fields as outlined on the attached plan (**Appendix A**). The area is owned by the Council and is currently 3293m².
8. In October 2007 the Council's Community Services Department (Environmental Services) undertook a review of the play area and removed some of the equipment, as it was outdated and dangerous. Residents were fully consulted on the matter at the time of removal.

Proposal

9. In designing the external environment for the new school, it has been proposed that the school and the local community would gain greater benefit if the area of the Grass Street Play Park were remodelled and new play equipment provided.
10. The proposal is to incorporate the shaded area on the attached plan into the school site as school playing fields. The remaining area would be retained as Grass Street Play area and a sum of money would be allocated to provide new play equipment for the local community.

Outcome of Consultation

11. In September 2007 consultation was undertaken with over 1,000 people to seek their views and opinions on the proposed developments for the new school site. The consultation included residents, local councillors, parents, children and Staff from North Road Primary School.
12. At the time of consultation no decision had been taken about the future of Grass Street Play area but to aid discussion the proposed plans showed the whole of the play area taken out of use and re-provided as school playing field. A smaller area for play equipment was shown adjacent to St Paul's Place.
13. Responses to the consultation clearly showed that local residents were opposed to the re-siting of the play area near St Paul's Place for fear of creating an area for anti-social behaviour to occur. No comments were received regarding the re-siting of the play area away from Grass Street.
14. In light of the comments it is proposed that the play park is left in its current location, (adjacent to Grass Street), and the area reduced to a more manageable size.
15. Consultation has also taken place with the Assistant Director for Environmental Services who feels that the proposed reduction in size of Grass Street Play area is acceptable as long as sufficient funding is allocated to re-provide the play equipment. An allocation has been

set aside within the overall budget for the new school project and designs for this area will be developed with officers in the Community Services Department (Environmental Services) and residents who neighbour the site.
